

OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY
University Policies and Procedures

4500 - ACCOMMODATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Statement: Old Dominion University is committed to achieving equal educational opportunity and full participation for persons with disabilities. It is the university's policy that no qualified person be excluded from participation in any university program or activity, be denied the benefits of any university program or activity, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination with regard to any university program or activity. This policy derives from the university's commitment to non-discrimination for all persons in employment, access to facilities, student programs, activities and services.

Disability Services shall oversee the assessment of student requests for accommodation and assistance and shall coordinate the development of the program among the student, faculty members, and department chairs. In addition, the office shall implement the university's disability program for students and supervise the delivery of equipment and services.

The Director of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action is the section 504 coordinator who will monitor the implementation of these guidelines.

The provisions of services to students with documented disabilities at Old Dominion University are based on the principle of non-discrimination and accommodation in academic programs set forth in the implementing regulations for Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. These services will be provided within the basic guidelines to follow, with the understanding that students with disabilities may require unique accommodations and must have their needs assessed on a case-by-case basis. The provision of accommodations for students with documented disabilities need not guarantee them equal results or achievement; accommodations must only afford them an equal opportunity for achievement. Old Dominion University is committed to providing students with documented disabilities the same opportunity to achieve academic success as it provides for all students.

I. Definition of Those Qualified for Assistance

The appropriate recipient of accommodations is defined as one who has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities, such as walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, performing manual tasks, or learning. In addition, a person who has history of such an impairment is qualified for assistance. With respect specifically to the postsecondary setting, such a person must be otherwise qualified under the academic standards requisite for admission in spite of the disability.

II. Recruitment

The Office of Admissions at Old Dominion University will make all reasonable effort to assure that all recruitment activities are made accessible to persons with documented disabilities. All schools hosting Old Dominion University recruitment activities will

be encouraged to provide information that such facilities are accessible so that interested persons with disabilities will not be excluded or denied participation. In keeping with this policy, Old Dominion University will provide, if given adequate advance notice, such services as interpreters, audiotapes or reader services at recruitment functions.

III. Admissions to the University

A. General Admission

The requirements for general admission for persons with disabilities are no different from other persons applying to Old Dominion University. The official application for general admission to the university will not ask for information concerning an applicant's physical or mental disability. However, there are programs within the university which have technical standards which must be met. A prospective student may choose to self disclose in the admissions process.

B. Acceptance to Specific Programs

Technical standards have been established by each academic program which describe the skills the student must have or be able to acquire in order to meet curriculum requirements and to perform successfully in an academic program. The university is not required to make major academic adjustments, fundamental changes, or substantially modify standards for acceptance into or completion of any academic program. Students with disabilities interested in applying for acceptance to a particular program should assure that they are aware of any applicable technical standards.

If a question arises about the qualifications of a student with a disability who wishes to be accepted in a particular degree program, the department chair shall have the responsibility of deciding whether or not the applicant will be accepted to the program. After having considered the requests for accommodation presented by the student, as well as the technical standards for the requested program, the department chair shall determine whether or not the student is otherwise qualified for acceptance to the program.

In making the determination, the department chair should consult with the student's advisor and Disability Services. If, after careful consideration, the department chair decides that the student is not otherwise qualified for acceptance to the program of study, the student will be advised of his or her academic options. The decision of the department chair may be appealed to the dean. The dean shall consult with the Director of Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action prior to deciding the appeal. The decision of the dean is final.

IV. Determination of Need for Reasonable Accommodations/Academic Adjustments

Under Section 504, institutions are required to respond by making modifications in academic requirements as necessary to ensure that such requirements do not discriminate or have the effect of discriminating against a student with a disability.

The information sent to students upon acceptance to the university shall include a notice that it is the responsibility of students with a disability to contact Disability Services to arrange for accommodations. The information provided by the student in doing so will be kept confidential and shared only with those involved in arranging for accommodations.

Students who request reasonable accommodations must be prepared to provide documentation of the disability by a qualified professional, where appropriate, before accommodations will be implemented. Except under extraordinary circumstances, the documentation must be current, i.e., dated no more than three years prior to enrollment in the university.

Documentation must provide sufficient information to assist the institution in determining what difficulties the student would encounter in a normal learning environment. Although formats will vary, the following critical data should be included in any documentation in support of a request for accommodations:

1. The Student's name, the dates of examination or testing, the examiner's name and credentials;
2. Reasons for referral;
3. The learning disability, a list of the tests administered, including the names of the tests as well as the version used;
4. An analysis or interpretation of test results;
5. Diagnostic summary with a brief composite of the entire assessment process (the summary should address the concerns raised in the "reasons for referral"); and
6. Recommendations of strategies to assist the student in becoming an efficient learner.

A student with a documented disability who has registered for class or has been accepted into the university can request support services and the use of assistive technology for classroom and extracurricular activities. The student must notify Disability Services of the accommodations required within a reasonable time prior to the date of anticipated need. Reasonable accommodations by the university are possible only after contact with Disability Services has been initiated. Students needing sign language interpreters or special equipment should provide 45 days notice to Disability Services.

A request for accommodation shall be assessed by the Office of Disability Services after carefully reviewing the diagnostic evaluation and the student's previous scholastic performance. Each will be reviewed on its own merit and verified by objective documentation about the effect of the specific documented disability on the ability to learn in the content area in question.

Students are encouraged to self-identify their documented disability to their professors at the beginning of each semester to avoid delays in receiving accommodations. If students are newly documented during the course of a semester, accommodations will be implemented within a reasonable time period, usually two weeks following presentation of the documentation.

In order to receive accommodations, students must supply their instructors with letters from Disability Services which verify their disability and identify reasonable accommodations. The student and faculty member shall:

1. discuss the implementation of appropriate accommodations;
2. note their respective agreement to these accommodations; and
3. return the signed forms to Disability Services noting their agreement in the space provided.

Students who have a documented disability may elect not to disclose the disability. Should the student seek accommodations late in the semester, or if a student has a disability which is not obvious and chooses not to disclose it, then he/she should be aware that 1) all previous grades will stand as earned, and 2) accommodations will be implemented in a timely manner, usually within two weeks. For students who are newly identified and documented during the course of a semester and thus have not had the advantage of accommodations, considerations will be made on a case-by-case basis in consultation with all parties involved.

The types of accommodations provided to students with documented disabilities will vary depending on the nature of the disability and the course content. Often an initial trial and error period may be needed to determine the best way to accommodate a student's disability.

Disability Services will advise the students in writing of the results of the assessment. This notification to the student from the university shall serve as a guide for the provision of services from the university for the semester or situation specified.

If accommodations do not meet the needs of the student, the student or are not implemented, the student should contact Disability Services for further assistance. Disability Services will determine the reasonableness of the accommodation(s) requested. If Disability Services determines that the request is reasonable, it will consult with the appropriate chair and, if necessary, the Dean to reach agreement on the accommodations to be provided.

If Disability Services does not agree with the student's request, then the student may follow the procedures outlined in Section VI of this policy.

V. Support Services

A. Advising

Students with documented disabilities should make sure that their advisors are aware of the disabilities so that the advisor can guide the student as to course or degree requirements which may affect the student's completion of the course or degree program.

B. Classroom Accommodations

The university shall provide the following minimal accommodations for students with documented disabilities in the classroom: 1) classroom activities, including testing procedures and other methods of evaluation used for classroom participation, shall be reasonably modified to provide students with documented disabilities with the opportunity to participate; 2) the location of classrooms shall be changed as appropriate to accommodate the student with a disability; 3) a reasonable number of elective courses shall be held in accessible facilities; and 4) the use of special equipment and assistive technology.

C. Student Services and Activities

Students with documented disabilities at Old Dominion University shall be provided reasonable accommodation for participation in and use of student services and activities including housing, health, insurance, counseling, financial aid, physical education, athletics, recreation, transportation or other extracurricular programs or activities.

Given adequate notification, those students who require assistive technology and assistance for counseling settings will be provided with the aids and assistance necessary to participate.

At athletic and extracurricular activities, such as concerts and stage entertainment, special seating will be provided for students using wheelchairs as audience participants. For Old Dominion University sponsored lectures, cultural activities, convocations and commencements, the participation of students with documented disabilities shall be provided, upon request, through the aid of sign interpreters, assistive technology or other reasonable accommodation. Arrangements shall be made by Disability Services if sufficient notification is given.

D. Housing

Old Dominion University provides on-campus housing space which has been specifically reserved for occupancy by students with documented disabilities and is moderately barrier free. The university will provide and assign students with disabilities to housing as such space is available in residence halls and apartment settings. Roommates will be assigned to students with disabilities occupying modified rooms in the same manner as other resident students.

It is the responsibility of the student to identify him/herself as a student with a documented disability seeking university housing in order to be considered for a reserved space. Application for a reserved space for a student with a disability should be made to Disability Services.

The Office of Student Housing will assign that space based on information provided by Disability Services. Priority will be based on the greatest physical need to live in university housing as a means of providing a student with a disability opportunity to successfully fulfill his/her academic program at the university. Final selection for reserved spaces for students with disabilities will be completed at a specified date in mid-summer of each year. Students will be informed of their room assignment by the Office of Student Housing. The remaining spaces reserved for students with disabilities will be turned over to the Office of Student Housing staff for assignment to students on the housing waiting list. Any student with a documented disability has the alternative of applying through the housing application process and is not required to take a reserved space. However, students who have special needs should make sure the regular housing space can accommodate their needs.

Rental rates for students with documented disabilities shall be set at the same rate as for any other student at Old Dominion University. The exception to this is the single room policy that provides for a limited number of single room accommodations available for qualified students with documented disabilities at the rate which would normally be charged for double occupancy. The request for single accommodations must be made to Disability Services and be properly documented. A final determination is made by Disability Services in collaboration with the Office of Student Housing. Returning students may request that they be assigned to the same space as in the previous year. Students should proceed through the regular housing process to request the same space.

VI. Complaint Resolution Process

If a student with a documented disability believes that he/she has not been provided with the services to which he/she is entitled, the student should direct his/her complaint to the university 504 coordinator who is the Director of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action.

The student shall provide to the Director of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, in writing, documentation of the disability, the nature of the discrimination, and any other information deemed important. The director will then attempt to reach an agreement through an informal mediation process. If an agreement is reached, a copy of the agreement shall be provided to the student and the faculty member. If an agreement cannot be reached, the director will convene an ADA Evaluation Committee for the purpose of evaluating the case and making a recommendation to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. The decision of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs is final.

The members of the ADA Evaluation Committee will include the Director of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action (chair), the General Counsel, the Director of Disability Services, the appropriate dean and a designated representative from Academic Affairs.

Responsibility: Director of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action and Dean of Students and Chief Student Affairs Officer

Authorization: John R. Broderick, Acting President

Date: December 1, 1988; Revised May 2, 1994; Revised September 2, 2008